

MARKETING

ISSUE #393 DEC 2023

WEEKENDER™



**SANDEEP & THE MAGNIFICENT
7 LEAD THE CHARGE**

**68 AWARDS,
OVER 25 NEW BRANDS WON...**

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Astonishing &
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**A RESOLUTION
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AGENCY
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“If non-Malay PM won’t do, is female PM okay?”

Mariam Mokhtar, President of the Perak Liberation Organisation (PLO), on MalaysiaKini.

“If you love someone, protect them from yourself. Nobody can hurt them like you can”

@Disapppointmentpandaa



“My suggestion to Anwar is that this is the best time to amend the Federal Constitution so that only a Malay who is Muslim can become the prime minister of Malaysia.”

**Machang MP and PN lawmaker Wan Ahmad Fayhsal
Wan Ahmad Kamal**

“I think we need to have a balance so that there are some returns for media companies.”

Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil addressing the issue of online advertising revenue only paid to social media platform providers and not to media organisations.





They Can Go F**k Themselves

Did Elon Musk say FU to advertisers? Yes, at The New York Times DealBook Summit.

At Tesla's annual shareholder meeting earlier this year, Elon Musk, the man who doesn't believe in advertising, said, "A lot of people follow the Tesla account or my account on Twitter (now X), to some degree it is

EDITOR'S NOTE

...It is no secret that the advertising business is not exactly in a state of nirvana lately...

preaching to the choir, and the choir is already convinced . . . so we'll try a little advertising and see how it goes."

Now he has slammed advertisers who have stopped using his platform X, saying it will kill the platform.

When the world's richest man (net worth USD245 billion) says he will not be blackmailed by advertisers money, one has to sit up.

He even took a shot at Bob Iger, CEO of the Walt Disney Company, one of the companies that pulled advertising from X.

A few days later, he demanded Bob be fired, saying, "Walt Disney is turning in his grave over what Bob has done to his company."

Disney, like other major companies, stopped advertising on X after Elon endorsed an antisemitic conspiracy theory echoing White supremacists.

He latest apologised for the post after companies ceased their relationships with X.

There has been a tidal wave of online comments and coverage about his outburst since.

Was it a meltdown?

It is no secret that the advertising business is not exactly in a state of nirvana lately.

And I bet you some closet agency folk got their share of glee at Elon's profanity, even though he has contributed to a surge in hate speech, misinformation and conspiracy theories on the platform.

Hey, I'm just saying....

At least I did not use the word "moron" on him.

Happy holidays, and let's see what the New Year brings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Parmanan', with a large, stylized flourish above the name.

Amp'd, Astonishing & Awesome!



We managed to catch up with Sandeep Joseph, CEO and co-founder of Ampersand Advisory, who has just returned from Singapore with a cold, hard slab of metal: Campaign Asia's Gold for Malaysia Independent Agency of the Year 2023. It's

the fifth year in a row that Ampersand Advisory has won either a Gold or a Silver for this category and Sandeep is noticeably elated.

"Some people take awards for granted. Those who can't win them diss them or claim they

COVER STORY



are irrelevant. We work hard for them and we value them. They are not a symbol of pride, but a sign of market effectiveness and industry relevance. When clients are judges, as they are for all the competitions we do well in, it means that our work is best in class and relevant to the business needs of the times.”


Ampersand Advisory, founded in February 2017 has won 68 awards in calendar year 2023 alone.

This includes being ranked #1 at Dragons of Malaysia, #3 at Dragons of Asia.

It includes winning Overall Creative Markie, Overall Media Markie at the MARKies, several metals at the Appies, and 15 metals at the Marketing Excellence Awards.

The year also saw this young company get listed on the prestigious FT Statista High Growth Companies Asia Pacific 2023, an elite list of 500 of Asia’s fastest growing companies across 14 countries like Japan, China, Australia and India.

In a momentous event, in the spiritual home of advertising, Ampersand Advisory was



“I tell everyone that AI today is where the internet was in 1994. We’re at the beginning of the greatest revolution imaginable. Work and life will be re-defined and morphed, possibilities will be endless.”

COVER STORY

profiled in Campaign UK as one of the top 10 independent agencies of the world, with the magazine distributed in sunny Cannes on the Croisette and the Palais during the ad festival where the world's great and good ad folk gather.

At the end of 2022, Ampersand Advisory won the media business for an iconic advertiser, Etika. This win includes 18 brands of Etika: Wonda Coffee, Goodday, Pepsi, Mountain Dew and others.

Beyond this, in 2023 Ampersand Advisory also won the media business of UEM

Sunrise, creative work for Allianz insurance and much more.

According to market surveys, these wins make Ampersand Advisory the largest local media agency in Malaysia. But that's not the whole story, because this company is not just about media. It would be fair to say that Ampersand Advisory is breaking new ground and establishing a new paradigm for agencies in Malaysia: it has created a truly integrated offering across media, creative and data that drives, the simple yet all-encompassing tagline that the agency believes in: **business results now!**



#1 ranked agency at Dragons of Malaysia 2023

COVER STORY

We decided to shoot a bunch of questions at Sandeep, to get a pulse on what Ampersand Advisory is up to, and where it is headed, as it caps off a truly remarkable year for a company that's not yet 7 years old.

What's the year been like?

It's been amazing, perhaps the kind of year that may never happen again.

We scored 68 awards, heaps of new business, low employee attrition, no significant client loss, a Guinness World Record for the Wonda Kopi Tarik Marketing Magazine, #1 rank at two award shows, the Dragons of Malaysia and the MARKies, beat a bunch of bigger media and creative agencies.

The challenge is for us to now repeat this, in 2024, and build on the foundation laid by so many people working so hard in synergy.

We need to prove now that this annus mirabilis is not a ridiculous flash in the proverbial pan, but is the result of the talented people we hire and empower, and a process where we respect each other and work seamlessly together.



What's the agenda for 2024?

We're working on managing growth in a sustainable manner. We're expanding our team: from 70 we think we're going to grow to 80 people or so. We're not in the business of size for the sake of it. It's all about profitable growth, the nature of growth that provides equitable opportunities to young people, with good remuneration and space to grow.

Our reputation and brand awareness is growing, though there is still acres of headroom.

While we're now regarded as a big player in media, and a growing player in creative services, some of our new services like Public Relations are gaining traction. We've beaten

COVER STORY



An innovative hunt for a band with all members being seniors (over the age of 50) helped TENA adult diapers gain awareness with new audiences and spread the message of Active Ageing. The selected band starred in a TENA commercial and went on tour across Malaysia. This campaign has won 12 awards across 4 different ad shows.

very well-established players in this space to gain new business and win awards.

It's early days, there's a lot to be done, and we need to continue to grow fast.

2024 is going to be a difficult year for many industries: we need to continue to be an effective and empathetic business partner to our clients in various diverse industries. Post Covid, with 70% of ad budgets being spent on digital, many clients are confused and worried as they don't see the returns they

had projected. We need to guide them through this inflationary new normal, where consumer habits have irrevocably changed in many ways.

One simple course correction we are advocating: don't put all your eggs in the digital basket. There is plenty of data to suggest that the pendulum has swung too far, and there must be greater investment in those traditional media channels that drive brand salience and preference.

Then there's AI: game changer is a tame word for what it

COVER STORY



Ampersand Advisory worked with Media Prima Audio and Etika to make Malaysia's first AI radio DJ Aina the brand representative for Calpis.

promises to do in our lives. It's a whole new world, and we're keen to explore its furthest frontiers. I tell everyone that AI today is where the internet was in 1994. We're at the beginning of the greatest revolution imaginable. Work and life will be redefined and morphed, possibilities will be endless. We're proud that our client Calpis is the first to sponsor Malaysia's first AI radio DJ, Aina. We've developed ads using Aina, and we've developed cutting edge material for multiple brands using tools like Midjourney, Dall-E and many more. Again, the journey is just beginning.

So the agenda for 2024 is simple:

- Grow profitably without compromising quality
- Develop our young people and help them grow
- Drive the adoption of AI to be ahead of the competition
- Continue to strengthen our core products and services, while new ones become more embedded

What are the biggest challenges you are facing?

The challenges we face are the same as other players in our industry.

1. Talent, which is scarce, and

COVER STORY

who, if they are any good, may not want to work in advertising. We need to make it a crazy, sexy, cool profession again. In the argot of today, we need to bring the Rizz back. To do so, we as an agency need to keep improving internally. We're building our own customized softwares to track and improve productivity. And we're empowering the juniors to make decisions in a guided framework. But 2024 will be about a lot of training and high expectations. I was running 3 offices and 40 people across India at the age of 28. I truly believe we need to give our young people the tools, platforms and opportunities to shine. Then it is up to them to carpe diem.

2. Helping clients see the bigger picture, beyond the dollars and sen. Too often, pitches are decided by Procurement, and pricing becomes a race to the bottom. There are enough cases of agencies in Malaysia dropping their dignity to

... we as an agency need to keep improving internally. We're building our own customized softwares to track and improve productivity...

win a business, then finding it impossible to adequately staff and run the business they won. Which inevitably leads to the next cycle of pitches coming along in double quick time. Clients need to re-look at their RFPs, and think about building relationships as opposed to transactional engagements. Penny wise, pound foolish has never been truer than today.

What's the secret to your team strength?

Our management team is all women. They are extremely talented, extremely hands on, extremely committed, extremely objective-oriented. They are all strong women who lead their disciplines with grace, credibility

COVER STORY



Wonda Kopi Tarik sets a Guinness World Record for the world's longest concertina/leprello publication with Marketing Magazine



To help boost brand equity, while spreading financial literacy amongst children, Goodday launched KidSTART, a competition for kids aged 7-14, where they could pitch their business idea and get funding. Reaching 5 million Malaysians, the campaign helped boost penetration in schools, drove brand affinity, and was recognized with a Malaysia Book of Records entry, apart from multiple awards across APPIES, MSA Awards, MARKies, Dragons and Marketing Excellence Awards.

COVER STORY

“My job is to get out of the way, to provide support, give them the freedom to hire and counsel, point to an occasional direction and put a shoulder to the wheel with them. They inspire me to work harder and better every day.”

and expertise. My job is to get out of the way, to provide support, give them the freedom to hire and counsel, point to an occasional direction and put a shoulder to the wheel with them. They inspire me to work harder and better every day.

What are you most proud of?

We were blessed that we started with the backing of Tan Sri Vincent Lee, our visionary Chairman. He is an industry legend, and full of wisdom. Even spending half an hour with him is highly illuminating and inspiring. He has remarkable clarity of thought, and has given

me great advice through the years. I am truly honoured to be his partner. I would never want to let him down. I am proud that he champions us and believes in us. And I am proud of what we have built so far: the past should be prologue, the future is even more exciting.

I am also extremely proud that we could play a role to help our client Etika win Advertiser of the Year and Marketer of the Year 2023 at the recent Marketing Excellence Awards. And we're also very proud that we could play a supporting role for our cherished client Coway to win Advertiser of the Year at the Kancils 2023. If our clients are doing well, we're over the moon.

What's the metric you want to be measured on?

Ampersand Advisory should always be seen as innovative, agile, quick to respond, wise, trustworthy. Good people to build a lasting relationship with. Advertising is not rocket science: at heart, it is simple, emotional, detailed, data-inspired, magical. If we can continue to deliver on these metrics, the business and awards will continue to roll in.

SHOWCASE



REPORT
**VIOLENCE
AGAINST
PET
ANIMALS.**
SOS ANIMAL

CMO Awards 2023 winners announced



The Malaysian (Chief Marketing Officers) Awards winners list has been finalised.

This year, a new format has been introduced. And a new purpose added fuel to the process – NEXT STOP: CEO.

Marketing results are now measured against business outcomes, company performance and leadership metrics. This year, we strengthened our processes and criteria to encompass these growth values.

Today's CMOs lead transformation, bottom lines,

CMO AWARDS 2023



long term business strategy, market expansion and unlike most C-suite players, they are responsible for P&L, COGS and ROI.

We are proud our CMO winners have gone on to head companies and sit on boards.

Winners have also expanded their roles to include regional and Asia footprints.

PROCESS:

CMOs were shortlisted by a panel of industry watchers and **MARKETING** magazine Malaysia who fit the criteria. They were then contacted for phone interviews to complete their nomination dossiers. There are also no categories this year, as nominations compete openly, industry categories will

CMO AWARDS 2023



be attributed in their victories subsequently.

Global growth and advisory firm Ipsos Strategy3 was engaged by the CMO Awards Organisers to prepare all nominations over a two months period.

Finally, nominees were invited for a face to face “interview” session with reputable CEOs and Board-level players on December 9.

**Ipsos Strategy3 is one of the world’s top management consulting firms - Forbes 2022 & 2023.*

Assessments were based on both evidence-based information and qualitative insights.

CRITERIA:

1. Marketing Performance (30%)
KPIs for most significant campaign for the year.

Campaign Objective.

Campaign Strategy.

Campaign Success.

Campaign Uniqueness.

2. Business Performance (30%)

Company’s revenue growth and profitability. Market share, market expansion.

Brand equity and traction.

Customer satisfaction and acquisition.

3. Leadership Performance

(30%)

Strategic Brand Vision.

Team Building & Culture.

Tech Optimisation. Growth

Sustainability. ESG factors.

4. Popularity Performance

(10%)

Taken from on an online

poll among MARKETING

Magazine’s readers, based

on “Marketers I admire the

most”.

CMO AWARDS 2023**JUDGES:**

Seasoned and new judges made up the interview panels on December 9 at the Sime Darby Convention Centre. All judges vetted the dossiers a week earlier and faced probably the largest marketing brain trust in Malaysia on that day.

Renzo C Viegas

Founder and Executive Director
Crescer Sdn Bhd

Datuk William Ng

Founder & Group Publisher
Business Media International
Chairman Small and Medium
Enterprises Association Malaysia
(SAMENTA)

Dato' Samson Anand George

Vice President
KIA Asia Pacific

George Ang

CEO & Director
Inter Mark Resources Sdn Bhd
and A&W Malaysia

Santharuban T. Sundaram

Chief Executive Officer
Etika Holdings Sdn Bhd

Datuk Yvonne Chia

Chairman Standard
Chartered Bank Malaysia Berhad

Krishnamurthy Sriram

Chief Executive Officer
Wipro Unza Malaysia

Dato' Sri Mohammed Shazalli Ramly

Independent NED,
AirAsia X Bhd (AAX)

CMO AWARDS 2023**WINNERS:**

All winners went through the entire evaluation process and are listed here in alphabetical order...

Abdul Sani Abdul Murad

Group Chief Marketing Officer
RHB Bank Berhad

Amy Gan

VP, Marketing
Etika Holdings Sdn Bhd

Andrew Yeoh

Head of Marketing
TIME dotCom Berhad

Chan May Ling

Head of Brand and Marketing
Services
CelcomDigi

Danny Hoh

GM - Marketing & Customer
Growth (Sustainability)
Watsons Malaysia

Datuk Lai Shu Wei

Chief Marketing & Sales Officer
Sime Darby Property

Emily Chong

CMO, Pizza Hut Malaysia
QSR Brands (M) Holdings Bhd

Fernie Jasmine Abdul Ghani

Head of Group Marketing &
Brand
Axiata Group Berhad

Gigi CY Lee

Head, Group Business Banking
Marketing & Customer Insights
RHB Bank Berhad

Hassan Alsagoff

Regional Head of Marketing
GRAB Malaysia

Lau Yin May

Group CMO & Customer
Experience Officer
Malaysia Aviation Group
(Malaysia Airlines)

Lee Lim Meng

Marketing Director; CMO -
Consumer & Healthcare
Abbott Nutrition Malaysia

Linda Hassan

Group CMO - Malaysia,
Singapore & Cambodia
Domino's Pizza

Mark Tan

Deputy GM, Marketing Manager
IPC Shopping Centre

CMO AWARDS 2023**Melati Abdul Hai**

VP & CMO -

McDonald's Malaysia

Gerbang Alaf Restaurants

Sdn Bhd

Noreen Sabrina Mohd Noor

Head, Group Corporate

Communications & Branding

edotco Group Sdn Bhd

Saki GohSenior GM Marketing, Consumer
Care

Wipro Unza Malaysia Sdn Bhd

Shanti Jusnita Johari

Chief Marketing Officer

TM Berhad

Shazlina SuffianEVP & Head, Group Corporate
Marketing and Brand

Maybank Berhad

Siti Hajar Rizlan

Chief Marketing Officer

Syarikat Takaful Malaysia

Keluarga Berhad

Tiffany Tang

Marketing Director - Nutrition,

OTC - M'sia & S'pore, Vietnam

RB (Health) Malaysia Sdn Bhd

Zalman Aefendy Zainal Abidin

Chief Marketing and

Communications Officer

Hong Leong Bank Berhad

The official CMO Awards 2023 induction ceremony will be held at the Malaysian Petroleum Club on Feb 6, at 4pm.

Official Partners for the Malaysian CMO Awards 2023 are Ipsos Strategy3 (Knowledge Partner), The Marketing Academy (Global Advisory), Visual Retale (Creative Partner), Insider Global and Zoomer Media.

WHO'S WHO IN THE MALAYSIAN MARKETING LANDSCAPE



NEXT STOP: CEO

A READY REFERENCE TO THE LEADERS
WHO ARE MAKING A TRANSFORMATIVE
DIFFERENCE IN THE INDUSTRY.



THE MARKETEER STRIKES!



A Resolution for Compassionate Agency Leadership in 2024

As the clock ushers in the dawn of 2024, a fresh breeze of resolutions wafts through the vibrant halls of advertising agencies in Madaniland. Leaders pledge to steer their teams with empathy, authenticity, and clarity, promising to create environments that breed creativity and success.

However, the challenge remains: how can these

resolutions transcend the initial enthusiasm and endure throughout the year?

In the dynamic world of advertising, the spectre of being the 'boss from hell' is ever-present, casting a looming shadow over the collaborative spirit essential for creative endeavours. Yet, 2024 unfurls an opportunity for leaders to redefine their roles, weaving a

THE MALKETEER STRIKES!

narrative of support, inclusivity, and inspiration within the advertising landscape.

In the lexicon of effective leadership, the characteristics of a good boss are often debated, but some elements are immutable. A visionary leader with a strategic mindset, fostering an inclusive and creatively charged work environment, and actively developing the potential of each team member are the cornerstones of success.

Meet rapid-fire Gerald Dhanaraj Jones, a creative director in a bustling advertising agency who find themselves under the guidance of a new leader as the calendar turns to 2024. Gone are the days of stifling directives and impersonal leadership; in their place emerges a visionary committed to transforming the agency into a haven of innovation, bliss and collaboration.

The metamorphosis is palpable. Meetings become vibrant brainstorming sessions,



with ideas flowing freely and creativity sparking from every corner. The rigid structure of the workspace, once a barrier to spontaneity, now embraces the chaos of creativity. This isn't merely a change

in leadership; it's a revolution that breathes new life into the agency's creative spirit.

How did this leader manage to escape the 'boss from hell' archetype that often plagues the advertising industry? The answer lies in a vision that prioritises people over profit, and creativity over control. Instead of relying on fear tactics, this leader harnesses the power of empathy to understand the unique strengths and challenges of each team member.

Empathy, often dismissed as a soft skill, emerges as the heartbeat of this leadership transformation. Recognising that the creative process is deeply personal, the leader tailors his

THE MALKETEER STRIKES!



approach to the individual needs of the team. This not only fosters a sense of camaraderie but also unleashes

untapped barrages of creative potential, propelling the agency to unparalleled heights.

Authenticity plays a pivotal role in this transformation. The leader doesn't hide behind a facade of infallibility but embraces vulnerability, acknowledges mistakes, and seeks input from the team. This authenticity not only humanises the leader but also establishes a culture where learning from failures becomes a celebrated norm.

In the world of advertising, where innovation is the lifeblood, clarity becomes the unsung hero. Transparent communication emerges as the driving force,

ensuring that everyone in the agency is on the same page, dispelling uncertainties, and building trust.

As the story of Gerald D. Jones, the transformative leader, unfolds, it stands as a beacon for advertising leaders pondering their resolutions for the year ahead. This narrative invite introspection, urging leaders to question their approaches, reassess their priorities, and recognise the profound impact they have on the creative pulse of the agency.

In 2024, let the narrative of advertising leadership be rewritten with tales of bosses who choose empathy over ego, authenticity over artifice, and clarity over confusion. The story of Gerald D. Jones is a testament to the fact that the path to being a better boss is not an unattainable quest but a deliberate choice - one that can redefine not only leadership but also the very essence of creativity within the advertising realm.

Wishing everyone Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Generative AI-driven Consultancy Athenatech.ai launches with HQ in KL...

Seasoned industry professional Sonny Dey, formerly a Partner at Ampersand Advisory and Chief Data Strategist at Accenture Song (Entropia) and Chan Leong Teng, CEO of SKRIBBLE Me, unveiled Athenatech.ai. Sdn Bhd.

Athenatech.ai, a Gen AI driven consulting powerhouse marks its international presence in Malaysia, India, Bangladesh, and beyond to UAE, spotlighting Customer Value Management (CVM), Artificial Intelligence/ Machine Learning (AI/ML), ESG, and Sustainability.

Sonny Dey, Co-Founder

& CEO revealed in his media statement, “Athenatech.ai is dedicated to shaping the future of businesses through innovative GenAI solutions with our strategic partnership with MathCo, solidifying our commitment to providing data-driven intelligence.”

The launch of Athenatech.ai is timely and aligned with the Malaysian government’s national digitalization agenda as the Malaysian government is actively working towards establishing Malaysia as a leading hub for artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure and technology

ATHENATECH

in the region. This ambitious goal is slated to come to fruition through the Kuala Lumpur 20 (KL20) blueprint, scheduled for introduction in February 2024.

Sayandeb Banerjee, Cofounder and CEO of MathCo, highlighted, "Through this partnership with Athenatech.ai, MathCo marks an entry into the Southeast Asian market. We are excited to introduce our set of offerings that are committed to making enterprises self-sufficient in their AI and analytics endeavors." MathCo builds custom AI and Advanced Analytics solutions focused on enterprise problem solving through its innovative hybrid model. With a commitment to transparency and ownership, MathCo transfers ownership of intellectual property to its clients, allowing them to scale their proprietary applications efficiently without ever compromising on data security.

Chang Leong Teng, Partner Digital and Sustainability of Athenatech.ai, stated "Customer Value Management with GenAI will go deeper than the present legacy Media Mix, Attribution and Social Media platforms and other Performance related suites,

as it will interpret the data and recommend effective solutions. Athenatech.ai platform uses Large Language Models (LLM) and Synthetic data to get better scores on effective spending, budget sizing and prediction while creating scenario planning narratives.

"As part of our comprehensive ESG & Sustainability portfolio, Athenatech.ai encompasses solutions ranging from Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) to ESG monitoring & reporting for both enterprises and SMEs. This includes Carbon Profiling, Credit & Trading, Biomass to Clean Energy & Hydrogen.

Our specific emphasis is on delivering added value to SME sectors to advance ESG & Sustainability platforms," he emphasized.

Sonny Dey revealed that Athenatech.ai is actively in talks with business leaders in Malaysia to propel environmental solutions forward. Additionally, he stated that Athenatech.ai is establishing a Center of Excellence in Malaysia and India, powered by GenAI where cognitive engineers are diligently working toward a prototype rollout scheduled for early 2024.

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